



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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Department of Health Cautions North Dakotans To Delay Rebuilding Flood-Damaged Homes or Businesses Until Structures Are Dry

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health today urged North Dakotans affected by flooding to postpone rebuilding flood-damaged homes or businesses until the structures are dry, according to State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D.

Although the first response after a flood is to begin repairs or reconstruction as soon as possible, rebuilding too soon can cause mold to grow on wood and behind sheetrock. Mold can trigger allergic reactions, asthma episodes, infections and other respiratory problems. In addition, exposure can cause development of an allergy to mold, resulting in long-term health concerns.

“Many problems may result from rebuilding too quickly after a flood,” Dwelle said. “Although it may be tempting to rebuild as soon as possible, it is very important to let things dry out completely before putting up new sheetrock in areas of a building exposed to flood waters. In fact, wood and concrete may need several months to dry to prevent mold growth, even though the material may appear dry on the surface.”

The Department of Health offers the following tips to help ensure structures are dry before rebuilding:

- Get fresh air moving through the building. Fresh air will reduce moisture and help dry things out to prevent mold growth. Use fans and give the building plenty of time to dry. Remember that things may look dry on the surface long before they are dry on the inside, and this can lead to costly mistakes.
- Reduce the humidity in the building. Open up the house during the day and close it at night. Weather permitting, open all the doors and windows to exchange the moist indoor air for drier air from the outside. Open closets and cabinet doors to let air circulate, and use fans to move the air. Basements that have concrete block walls typically will take longer to dry.

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- Check the moisture in wood by using a moisture meter. Moisture meters may be available from a local NDSU Extension Service office, a local public health unit or local building material suppliers or contractors. Moisture meters range in price beginning at around \$25 for basic models and may be purchased at hardware and building supply stores or online. The moisture content of the wood should be less than 15 percent before rebuilding.

For more information, contact Ken Wangler, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5188.

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